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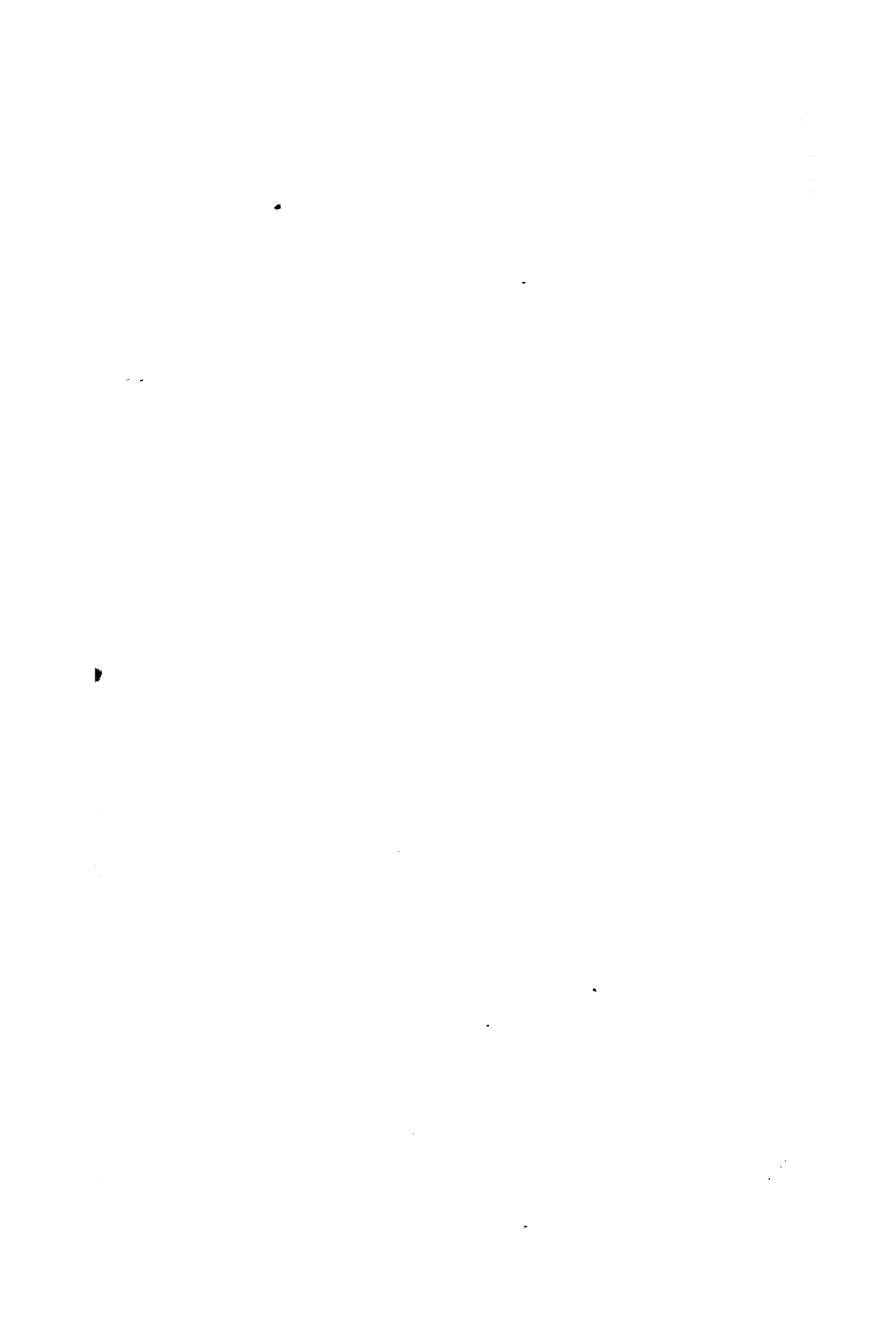


1922









ESSAY

ON

CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY,

By Rev Joseph Tracy D.D.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

6-13-50 (M)
THE contents of the following pages were first published in the *Vermont Chronicle* in 1830—31, and of course with reference to the state of theological discussion in New England at that time. But the topics belong to all time; and the fact that for nearly twenty years these papers have been frequently inquired for by persons interested in philosophical and theological studies, is not certain proof of something permanently valuable either in the matter or the manner of them, is at least as good evidence in their favor as can be pleaded for most books published so long ago. The author, however, has either never seen reason or has wanted leisure to comply with the requests that have been made, that he would revise and enlarge the papers; and they are now reprinted, not through his agency, but only with his consent, in their original form, and with the original title,—a title which must still be regarded as of no higher pretension here than when it appeared as the *heading* of fugitive newspaper sketches.

In the articles from the same pen and published in the paper during the two or three years immediately succeeding the appearance of this series, the principles here developed were further illustrated in connection with various subjects of public interest, chiefly theological and religious. Materials of this kind might be selected, written with as much thought as the articles now reprinted, sufficient to fill a volume. But the author thinks it enough, for the present, to consent to this publication as it is.

THE EDITOR.

Windsor, Vt. March, 1848.

CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY.

No. I.

LOCKE exploded the doctrine of *innate* ideas, and attributed all our knowledge to sensation and reflection as its source. What he meant by *reflection*, and whether he ever considered it minutely in its relation to the subjects which I am about to suggest, may admit of some doubt. Some of his followers, however, have considered it to be a taking to pieces and re-arranging of the impressions received by the senses, so as to form them, or parts of them, into new ideas. This doctrine, so understood, has led to divers strange inferences. One of the French metaphysicians considered *ideas* as *transformed sensations*. Berkley inferred the material world out of existence, and Hume did the same for the spiritual world. At least, so they are usually understood. And in the opinion of Reed and Stewart, they reasoned logically from the premises which Locke had laid down. The most taking infidel philosophy of the present day consists in denying the reality of all knowledge, which cannot be shown to have its origin in the senses. It rejects the existence of God, because no one has *seen* him, and because the idea of God cannot be formed out of any impressions received through the senses. I wish to offer a few remarks on what appears to me to be the fundamental error of this philosophy, and on the opposite truth. And I must request my readers not to get before me,—not to imagine what I am going to say; nor to attribute any doctrine to me, because they think it may be inferred from what I do say. We may differ about the correctness of the inference.

When I look around me, I am struck with the *mathematical* aspect of all things visible. The planets are spheroids, and move in elliptical orbits, and according to mathematical laws. The same principles of motion and force bear rule on earth, and pervade its structure and its changes. Its most solid and unchanged parts are crystalized and arranged according to fixed and definite laws. The combinations of chemistry are in definite proportions,—particle to particle, one to two, one to three, two to three, etc. united by forces, which *number* may represent. Such laws, to great extent, govern the vegetable world; and every year, by enlarging our knowledge, is diminishing the number of apparent exceptions. The flowers of

the same plant, when perfect, contain the same organs, and the same number of each, in the same positions and proportions; and its substance acts on animals according to laws which, if not mathematical, are no less fixed and definite. The same remarks may be easily applied to animals. Throughout this whole system, we may presume, that whatever irregularities exist are only apparent. They are cases where one law gives place to another of greater power in that respect; as the appearance of Dr. Halley's comet was retarded for a month, by the attraction of Jupiter.

What a system have we here of astronomy, chemistry, geology, botany, pharmacy, zoology—in short, of all knowledge of objects of sense, all harmonized by the pervading idea of number and measure! To these laws, the parts and sum total of the material universe were subjected in their creation. They cannot be what they are, but in obedience to them. These laws, therefore, must have been clearly seen and understood, before the creation of the material universe, by the eternal Mind who subjected it to their dominion.

I wish to fasten attention upon this point. All these laws were clearly and perfectly understood, before senses or objects of sense existed. There is nothing, therefore, in the nature of these laws, or in the nature of mind, which renders the intervention of sense necessary to the understanding of them. Whence, then, does the necessity arise? This question I must not attempt to answer at present, lest I should seem too forgetful of your hint about long communications.

No. II.

I have said, that the visible universe was, in its creation, put under the dominion of mathematical laws, as exemplified in the motions of the planets, etc. I said these laws were clearly understood by the Creator, before *senses* or *objects* of sense existed. I inferred, that there is nothing in the nature of these laws, or truths, which renders the intervention of *sense* necessary to the understanding of them. So far as it is necessary, the necessity must arise from some other cause, perhaps from a cause peculiar to the human race. I have intimated a design to inquire into the nature and influence of that necessity; but several other things demand attention first. Among them is another class of *laws*.

The *rational* universe was likewise subjected to certain laws in its creation; laws which each individual is required to understand, and to which each individual must voluntarily conform, as the condition of his own well-being. The *visible* universe is made subject to laws, which it does not—cannot understand; and herein differs essentially from the *rational*.—There is another difference. The indi-

viduals of the visible universe must be subject to the laws imposed upon them in their creation, or they cannot exist. *Rational* beings may violate their *moral* laws, and still continue to exist; but their *well-being* is at an end. In a moral point of view, they are "dead." Nor can they be made alive again, but by returning to the observance of the *moral* laws of their being.

It will readily be granted that the Creator perfectly understood all the *moral* laws of the rational universe, before he created that universe. He perfectly understood all the duties, which would be required of each individual. He knew all the consequences of obedience and disobedience. He had clearly in his mind, everything pertaining to the situation in which he was about to place them; everything pertaining to their duties and their interests; the happiness they might enjoy, the punishment they might deserve, the mercy that might be shown, and the final ruin which might follow its rejection.—We may say, then, of the *moral* laws of the universe, as of the mathematical;—that there is nothing in *their* nature, or in the nature of *mind*, which renders the intervention of sense necessary to a full and clear understanding of them. I must request the reader to attend particularly to this conclusion; for I regard a distinct acknowledgment and vivid recollection of it as of the first importance. However it may be with us in the acquisition of knowledge, mathematical and moral truth are not the creatures of *sense*, but have a reality entirely independent of it and antecedent to it; and which shall endure, and be the food of mind, when, perhaps, sense shall have ceased to exist, and all knowledge shall be intuitive.

No. III.

I have proved, I think, that mathematical and moral truth is not the creature of sense. There is nothing in the nature of these truths, or in the nature of mind, which renders the intervention of sense necessary to the understanding of them. Whence, then, does the necessity arise? In order to answer this question, we must inquire into the nature and extent of that necessity.

Did you ever *see* a mathematical circle, or line, or point? Is a *point* an object of sense, when it has no dimensions,—no length, breadth, nor thickness? Is a *line*,—which has length, but, being destitute of breadth and thickness, occupies no space? Is a strictly mathematical circle, bounded by a mathematical line, every part of which is absolutely equally distant from the centre, an object of sense? Can you even imagine that you actually see them? Can you form a distinct picture of them to your own mind? After all your efforts, will not your lines have width? and will it not be doubtful, whether your circle corresponds perfectly with the defini-

tion? In short, are not mathematical points, lines and figures, the creation of the *mind itself*? Is there any other way, by which those ideas can be obtained?

But we are told of a process called *abstraction*, which is said to be capable of extricating us from this difficulty. We *see* a visible figure, which differs but little from a mathematical circle, and the mind forms the idea of a true circle, by leaving out of consideration the difference. The difference between what? Why, between the *visible* circle and the mathematical. But what puts this thought into the mind? and how does the mind know what to leave out? How does it know what *the difference* is? Must not the idea of the true circle be already in the mind, before this process, by which it is said to be obtained, can be performed? To me it appears certain that it must.

But we are told again, that the idea does come in through the senses; for we see what *looks so much like* a circle that we do not perceive the difference. "*Like* a circle!" and "the difference," again! But, to pass over this begging of the question,—how happens it, in such cases, that we take the thing which we see, to be something which it is not? Whence, too, comes the idea of its being bounded by a mathematical line? And does geometrical demonstration amount only to this; that for anything which we *see*, the conclusion *may be*, so and so?

But it is said again, that mathematical ideas are not actually acquired by human beings, except as they are suggested by the senses. I grant that sensation furnishes the *occasions* of mental activity, and directs it to this or that object; at least, to a great degree. The sight of some rude approximation to a circle may be the hint, which puts the mind upon forming the idea of the circle itself; but *cum hoc, ergo propter hoc*, or in other words, "Tinterden steeple is the cause of Goodwin sands," because the sands were never dangerous till the steeple was erected, is bad logic.

The doctrine, that mathematical science is purely the work of *mind*, can be recommended to favorable notice by quotations from standard authors on intellectual philosophy; and it prepares the way for some very important conclusions in respect to morals. But these I must defer till another time.

No. IV.

I intimated, in my last number, that the doctrine, that mathematical ideas are creations of the mind itself, might be confirmed by a reference to standard writers on intellectual Philosophy. In proof of this, I will now bring forward some passages from the second volume of Stewart's *Philosophy of the Human Mind*.

He says, p. 126: "If a mathematician should affirm of a general property of the circle, that it applies to a particular figure described on paper, he would at once *degrade* a geometrical theorem to the level of a fact resting *ultimately* on the evidence of our imperfect senses." Here, it is evident, Prof. Stewart represents geometry as *not* resting ultimately on the evidence of our senses, but on evidence of a different kind.

On page 153, he notices the theory of Dr. Beddoes, that "the mathematical sciences are sciences of observation and experiment," and that mathematical evidence "originates from perception." Also, the doctrine of Mr. Leslie, which he considers essentially the same, that "the mode of proof," in geometry, "is nothing but an ultimate appeal, though of the easiest and most familiar kind, to external observation." The argument advanced in favor of this theory is, that the whole system of geometry rests on the fourth proposition of the first book of Euclid's elements, in which the equality of two triangles is proved, by supposing the one to be placed upon the other. "It is not," says Stewart, p. 160, "to an actual or *mere* superposition, but to an imaginary or ideal one, that any appeal is ever made to by the geometer. Between those two modes of proof, the difference is not only wide, but *radical and essential*. The one would, indeed, level geometry with physics, in point of evidence, by building the whole of its reasoning on a *fact* ascertained by mechanical measurement. The other is addressed to the understanding, and to the understanding alone, and is as rigorously conclusive as it is possible for demonstration to be." These remarks he confirms by quotations from D'Alembert and Dr. Barrows. A few lines after, he says: "In none of these steps is any appeal made to *facts* resting on the evidence of sense, nor indeed to any *facts* whatever;" and on the next page: "The material triangle itself, as conceived by the mathematician, is not the object of *sense*, but of *intellect*." I would refer the reader who wishes to pursue the subject at length, to Stewart's Philosophy, Vol. II. pp. 21—40 and 122—163. Those who wish to see his opinion on the "origin of our knowledge," are referred to Vol. I. p. 88—95.

These quotations and references might be greatly extended; but most who would be interested in the discussion, will know where to find them in their own libraries, and I wish to occupy as little space as possible, before I come to those topics which will show *why* these numbers are headed, "*Christian Philosophy*."

No. V.

Nothing, perhaps, has done more to secure a general reception of the sensuous philosophy, as, for want of a better name, we may call

it, than the notion that the inductive or experimental philosophy is built upon it. We are told how the ancient philosophers strained their faculties in vain, to discover the nature of things by abstract thinking; and how it is only since Bacon taught men to depend on actual observation and experiment, in other words, on the evidence of their senses, that any considerable progress has been made in Natural Philosophy.

But what is the object of the experimentalist? Is it merely to gather up facts and record them? Or is it, to discover what are those laws of nature, or ideas of the divine mind, to which the material universe was subjected in its creation? The student in optics places a mirror so that the rays of light from a certain body fall upon it and are reflected. He observes the angle of incidence and angle of reflection, and perceives that they are equal. He varies his experiment, till he is assured that the result is not produced by any accidental circumstance. He has now obtained a mathematical expression of one of the *laws* of light. He has learned what, in this respect, when translated into human language, is the *idea* of light, as it existed in the divine mind before light was. He has no doubt of its universality, as a law always governing the motion of light in the same circumstances.

The mathematical idea of equality was not furnished by the senses; but is, like all mathematical ideas, the work of the mind itself. The same is true of the idea of proportion generally. Experiment has not furnished our optician with it, but merely informed him that the reflection of light is subject to it. Without questioning sense again, he can, from the unborrowed stores of his own mind, predict the path of light, reflected under any given circumstances,—from surfaces of any given modification of concavity or convexity; and if a particular effect upon the senses is required, he can calculate the circumstances necessary to produce it, even if it be an effect never yet experienced by any human being. In other words, Herschell knew how to make his great telescope.

Similar remarks apply to every part of physical science. Experiment never furnishes the philosopher with a knowledge of the laws of nature themselves. It only informs him to what substances and in what cases each law applies.

No. VI.

Perhaps it is time to pause and reflect for a few moments, on the results to which we have arrived.

We have seen that mathematical ideas are not received through the senses, nor formed out of impressions received by the senses; but are elaborated by the mind itself from its own resources—the

notices furnished by sense being, at most, only the *occasions* of that mental activity, by which they are elaborated. And mathematical reasoning is in no degree dependent on the senses for the evidence of its correctness.

Here I observe, that mathematical truths, which are not received on the evidence of sense, are universally acknowledged to be indisputably true. The evidence on which they rest is universally regarded as more conclusive than any which the senses can furnish. "As certain as it is that two and two make four,"* is proverbial, as expressing the highest possible degree of certainty. The pure reason is the region of certainty,—of undoubted and undoubtable truth; while the reports of the senses are the region of doubt and mistake. A philosophy, therefore, which is made up of, and conversant with, nothing but sensations and the products and modifications of sensation, must be infested with doubts and must tend to skepticism; for, as our senses may and often do deceive us, its first principles can have nothing in them which may not be doubted.

I must call the reader's attention to another remark.—We regard mathematical truths, not only as unquestionably true, but as necessarily and unchangeably true. The denial of any one of them involves an absurdity. It is impossible for us to conceive that they should *not* be true, or that their opposites *should* be true.—This, by the way, is another proof that they do not rest on the evidence of sense. The senses can inform us what *is*; but how can they inform us what *must be*, and especially, what *cannot be*?

I introduced the last remark with a "by the way;" and yet it is not at all *out of* my way. It very conveniently introduces the proposition, that as *moral* truths are all necessary and immutable, they also must be learned otherwise than by the senses; and that our ideas of right and wrong, being but the forms in which we contemplate those truths, neither come in through the senses, nor are formed out of anything which does come in through them. But of this another time.

No. VII.

I am now, according to a previous intimation, to speak of *moral truths*, obligation, duty, right and wrong; but I am met in the outset with the objection, that there is no such subject to be discussed—

* Arithmetical ideas could no more come in through the senses than geometrical. *Counting* implies that several things are seen to be of the same kind; and this implies that the laws of their being, or the ideas of the Divine mind according to which they were created, are seen to be the same. And *laws* are never objects of sense. But I am unwilling to go into this subject minutely at present.

no such thing as duty—no distinction between right and wrong. How shall I dispose of it?

Do you say, he that makes such an objection as this must be a very wicked man; an unsafe member of society; one whom nobody can trust; one in whose word we can put no confidence? I grant that he must be a wicked man; that is, if his objection be not valid—if there be any such thing as wickedness. But how shall I prove *this to him*? How shall I so fence him in with arguments, that he must perforce own himself convinced?

Shall I tell him, that truth and honesty are very necessary to the welfare of society? "Perhaps they are," he replies; "but what is the welfare of society to me? I take care of myself. Let society do the same." "But surely, it is your *duty* to desire and promote the good of your fellow creatures." "I don't acknowledge that anything is any body's duty." "But if truth and honesty are banished, you must suffer with the rest of us." "When convinced of that, I will practice as much truth and honesty as I need, for my own interest; just as I now lie and steal." "But God requires you to speak truth." "What of that? Why must I heed his requirements?" "Because he is good." "I tell you, I don't believe anything about good and evil. No being is good, and no being is evil." "But he will punish liars." "Punish!" continues the objector; "put them in pain, you mean. Punishment supposes guilt, the possibility of which I deny. It may be a matter of *prudence* in me, to avoid pain; but prudence is one thing, and duty is another; or rather, duty is nothing."—How shall we answer such a man?

For my part, I know of no way to meet his objections, by proving that there is a distinction between moral good and evil; nor is it necessary. The objector himself knows it; nor is it possible for him to deny it, in such a way as not to betray himself. He states his objection. He denies any distinction between right and wrong. If he knows none, then he has not been guided by any such distinction, in stating his objection; and his words are mere pulses of air, which afford no evidence whatever, that the objection exists in his own mind. By conversing with me, he bespeaks my confidence in what he says—or why does he converse at all? If I am to put confidence in what he says, I am to regard him as a man who feels bound to speak the truth, and of course, acknowledges the existence of moral obligation—of a distinction between right and wrong. In short, that there is such a distinction, every man, from the very constitution of his nature, does and must take for granted. A man cannot deny it without self-contradiction.

To take another view of the subject,—how did Adam learn that it was his duty to abstain from the fruit of the tree of knowledge? By an express command of God. How did he learn that it was his duty to obey God's command? Not from the command itself; for if the first command had been, "thou shalt obey my words," how did he know that this *first* command was to be obeyed? How did

the idea of *moral obligation* find its way into the world, if it be not a part of the constitution of our nature to take it for granted?

Here, then, at the very outset of moral philosophy, we find ourselves in the same predicament as at the outset of geometry. We must have *postulates*. We must take for granted, certain truths which cannot be proved; but which, at the same time, no man can doubt. This necessity, however, no more weakens the force of moral evidence, than of mathematical. As we advance, we shall find the parallel between the two sciences growing more complete; and I will be content, if I can show that moral truths have as good a claim to rank among our most certain knowledge, as the propositions of Euclid.

If any think that I have not done as well as I might, in answering the objector who denies the distinction between right and wrong, I would remind him that the great Paley was unable to do any better. "Why," he asks, "am I obliged to keep my word?" The answer is, "Because I am urged by a violent motive, resulting from the command of another." God will reward him if he does, and punish him if he does not. "The difference, *and the only difference*," he tells us, between duty and prudence, "is this; that in the one case, we consider what we shall gain or lose in the present world; in the other case, we consider also what we shall gain or lose in the world to come." According to this definition, the member of a pirate's crew; who imbrues his hands in blood, at the command of the master of the vessel, and urged by the hope of sharing in the plunder and the fear of having his brains blown out, acts under the influence of moral obligation. He is "urged by a violent motive, resulting from the command of another." It is vain to try to avoid this conclusion, by saying that he expects his reward in this life; for surely, the mere time and place of receiving the reward—whether forthwith on the pirate's deck, at the end of the voyage, or in another world,—cannot alter the *moral nature* of the action.

I called the author of this system the *great* Paley; and truly he was a great man. He reasoned logically from the metaphysical premises generally received by those around him; and I seriously believe, he produced as good a system of moral philosophy as any one can *consistently* make, who rejects all knowledge but what comes through the senses, or is constructed of materials which come in through the senses.

If any doubt, whether moral truths are, in their own nature, capable of being known without the assistance of sense, such are requested to reperuse my first number.

No. VIII.

I regard the doctrine, that our knowledge of right and wrong neither comes in through the senses, nor is constructed out of materials which come in through the senses, as of the first importance; and must therefore be allowed to dwell upon it a while longer.

As I remarked in my first number, the moral laws to which mankind, and, it is impossible for us to doubt, all intelligent beings, are subject as the condition of their well-being, were fully and clearly understood by the Divine Mind, before organs of sense were created. The Deity did not wait till after the creation of man, and then gather a knowledge of these laws from a series of observations upon his nature. Neither can I conceive, that he first formed the idea of a man, and then learned, from a contemplation of his own idea, what ought to be the moral laws to which man should be subject. Indeed it appears to me, that without a view of these laws as the condition of man's well-being, the idea of *man* would be incomplete. Nor can I conceive that the knowledge which exists in the Divine Mind is in any case *gathered up* and generalized from a consideration of particulars. I conceive of God, as a being with whom all knowledge is immediate and intuitive; to whom all truths are eternally present; and in whose view, *things* and *events* are but exemplifications of principles, and all created existences but the realization of ideas, which are eternally present to his mind.

I do not believe that what I have just written is in its own nature unintelligible; though it may not at first appear very] lucid to those whose thoughts have never taken this direction. But however that may be, I trust that all will see that moral truths were understood by the Divine Mind, before senses were created; and that, therefore, there is nothing in the nature of moral truths, or in the nature of mind as such, which renders the intervention of sense necessary, in order that they may be understood. In this they agree with mathematical truths.

Where, then, is the evidence, that sense has anything more to do with the acquisition of moral, than of mathematical truths? How will you prove, that the notices of sense are anything more than the occasions of that mental activity, in which the mind sees the difference between right and wrong by its own light?

Both these classes of truths are regarded by the mind as necessary, and therefore eternal and immutable, truths. How can this *necessity* be an object of sense, or inferred from any of the notices of sense? We can see concerning things and events, that they are so; but how can we see, by the bodily eye, concerning truths, that they *must be* so? Does not the fact, that they are seen as *necessary* truths, show conclusively, that the mind has a knowledge of them which the operations of the senses could not furnish? If, to any

one, this argument does not appear conclusive, I cannot make it appear so. It is a point which, from its own nature, each one must determine, by reflecting upon his own views of those truths which he sees to be necessary and immutable. Every one whose mind is constituted like my own, will perceive that what he sees to be necessary truth, relates to what is not and cannot be the object of sense.

Is morality, is right and wrong, an attribute of matter, or of spirit? If of spirit, how can a knowledge of it, or the elements out of which that knowledge is formed, come in through the senses?

To my own mind, these arguments have the force of demonstration; but I can scarce expect that they will appear equally forcible to such as look at them for the first time. Such persons I would refer to those used in my last number,—the fact, that the reality of moral obligation is in fact taken for granted, even by those who in words deny it,—and the impossibility of conveying the first idea of it to a mind which has no such idea. In what is to come, I shall consider the doctrine of these two numbers as proved or admitted, unless some one will point out to me, precisely *where* the argument appears to be defective.

No. IX.

It will be said, that if our knowledge of moral truths is not derived from sensation, but is, like our knowledge of geometry, the product of the mind itself, then moral truth ought to be as susceptible of demonstration as mathematical.

This I not only admit, but assert. I maintain that moral truth is capable of as rigorous and conclusive demonstration as mathematical.

A distinction, however, must be taken between *truths*, and the application of truths. The properties of the perfect triangle, as apprehended by the mind, are capable of demonstration; but in applying the principles demonstrated to the course of a ship driven by winds and waves, or to the surveying of land with every variety of surface, there is room for inaccuracy and uncertainty,—for *probable* conclusions, and the exercise of what we call a good judgment. So in morals; the principles by which we are to be governed are demonstrable, but the application of these principles to outward, sensible acts, may sometimes be matter of doubt. Every one knows that kindness is a duty; but it is possible for the Hindoo to think it an act of kindness, to leave his dying parent on the bank of the sacred river.

Another distinction respects the *diagram* to be used. Embodied human minds are unable to go far in geometrical reasoning, with-

out a diagram, or sensible representation of the truth to which attention is directed. In investigating the principles of morals, a man must be his own diagram. If the investigation is concerning actions, they must be considered as done, either by him, or to him. If it respects feelings, they must be regarded as felt, either by him, or towards him. Whenever the feelings or actions are considered as those of another person, that other person must, from the necessity of the case, be invested by the mind with the same attributes which the student himself is conscious of possessing; and therefore, this other person is but a second self—a reflected image of the student's own moral being. True, this studying of duty as, *our* duty, in which a consciousness of obligation attends every step of the process, is a serious employment, for which those who are averse to the performance of duty will feel little relish; but it is the only possible way to study it with success. Of this, every man ought to be especially satisfied, who has ever preached against hearing sermons for our neighbors, without self-application.

Another circumstance respecting moral demonstration deserves particular notice. As the observance of moral laws is not the condition of our existence, but only of our well-being, so, when moral truths are presented to the mind, we do not always see it to be *impossible* to believe to the contrary, though we may always perceive it to be *wrong*,—morally wrong. If we would investigate moral truths, or in other words, our own duty, successfully, we must keep this in mind. We must not allow ourselves to deny or doubt a truth, the reception of which we perceive to be a duty, merely because it is *possible* to deny or doubt it. One who is determined to do this, is determined to do what he knows to be wrong,—to believe what he knows he ought not to believe. Why should we reason with such a man? Or what good would arguments do him? There is no sincerity in his pretended friendship for moral truth. If a man is not honest enough to acknowledge the distinction between right and wrong, we cannot even *begin* to prove anything to him; and in the progress of our discussions, when he refuses to acknowledge that to be right which he sees to be right, we must stop. *Sin has blinded his mind*; and we must wait till he becomes a better man, before we can proceed in our demonstrations. Hence the necessity of “doing the will” of God, if he would “know” his doctrine. “He that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” Men do not willingly admit that moral truth which condemns their present or intended course; and without the admission of the truth now before them, the demonstration of those truths which should follow is impossible.

Let these principles be kept in mind,—let the student apply himself to investigating the principles by which he should be governed, with the earnestness which he knows to be his duty, and let him admit as undoubted truth, whatever he sees it his duty to be-

lieve, and he will find moral truths opening his mind with all the clearness, order and force of demonstration. Such a process, in greater or less perfection, takes place in every genuine instance of conviction of sin. It is a process of original investigation. The inquirer, it is true, is guided by his moral text book, as the geometer is by his Euclid; but in both cases, the student sees for himself, that the doctrines laid down *must be* eternal truth. In both sciences, one may hear propositions announced, and suppose them true on the authority of others; but they can be understood as we need to understand them, only by original investigation.

Some objections will be noticed another time.

No. X.

It may be said, that if moral truth is in its nature demonstrable, like mathematical, there ought to be as great unanimity in the world in the one science as in the other. But this, it is said, is not the case. Mathematicians everywhere and in all ages agree in their principles and results; but on moral subjects, opinions are as numerous as individuals, and as various as their faces.

This looks plausible at first; but will scarce bear examination. In the first place, it does not appear that, in respect to mathematica, men are *fallen* beings. The truths of that science do not interfere with depraved appetites and passions; and hence there is no unwillingness, arising from that source, to admit them. There is no unwillingness to look at evidence, for fear that our past, present, or intended conduct will be condemned by it. These facts make a vast difference.

But after all, keeping in view the distinction between principles and the application of principles,—is it true that there is any such difference as the objection supposes? Are not the principles which are admitted to be correct, as uniform all over the earth in one science as in the other? Think of Newton or La Place; and then think of the savage, who can tell you how many children he has, only by holding up as many fingers, and whose whole stock of arithmetical ideas is exhausted when he has *thus* counted ten. What a difference! And on what an infinitude of questions, relating to number and measure, but not subjected to demonstration, will their *opinions* be altogether different! And yet there is no difference in the principles on which the savage and sage count ten.

Perhaps, owing to human depravity, the power of demonstrating is less employed by men on moral truths than on others; and if so, the amount of knowledge on moral subjects will be less than on other demonstrable subjects, to which more attention is given; and possibly, a very few may have arrived at such a fearful maturity in

evil, as wholly to reject all moral truths, not only from their practice, but from their present belief;—though they can never wholly divest themselves of all ideas of moral qualities, or make it certain that a conviction of the truth shall never be awakened within them, to embitter their future existence by condemning them. But leaving out of the question a very few monsters in human shape, whose existence indeed is a matter of doubt, and confining our attention to *men*, in whom all the essential characteristics of humanity visibly exist, we shall find that the first principles of morals are everywhere received as true, and are everywhere the same; and that the difference among men consists wholly in following out these principles to their legitimate conclusions, in the correctness with which they are applied to the various circumstances and wants of life, and in the entireness with which they are obeyed or disobeyed. Universally men see, with greater or less distinctness, that some things are right and others wrong; that intelligent beings have rights, which ought to be respected; and that kind thoughts and actions ought to be approved, and the contrary condemned. Even he who has never learned to apply these principles to his intercourse with strangers, and he who has been taught from infancy to violate them all habitually in dealing with his enemies or those of his tribe, still knows them to be true in their application to his family and his friends; and in seeing this, he sees the elements of all moral truth.

But, some one may object, if every one has in his own mind the elements of all moral truth, from which all the principles which he needs to govern himself by, may be demonstrated, what is the need, or what the possible use, of a revelation,—especially if each one must go through the process of demonstrating his own duty to himself, in order to understand it as he needs to do?

What, I ask in reply, can be the use of Euclid's Elements to the school-boy? He has in his own mind, the elements of mathematical truth, from which the whole system of geometry may be demonstrated; and he needs to go through the process of actual demonstration, and to see the truth of every proposition for himself, before he can understand it as he ought. The objection is as strong, or rather as destitute of strength, in one case as in the other. In both cases truths are brought to his mind, and he is enabled to understand them, which he never would have understood without such assistance. In both cases, the student has the advantage of knowing that the guide before him leads, by the best way, to the attainment of important truth, and therefore, that his labors need not be hopeless or fruitless. The student of Euclid has reason to conclude this, on the testimony of all preceding geometers. The student of the Bible knows it, or may know it, on far higher authority, the claims of which we will consider at some other time.

No. XI.

A. You acknowledge that there is a distinction between right and wrong—between virtue and vice?

B. Yes.

A. And that the idea of virtue includes in itself the idea of *obligation*—of something which you are *bound* to do?

B. Yes, certainly; for otherwise, right and wrong, virtue and vice, are unmeaning words.

A. And that obligation implies accountability?

B. What do you mean by accountability?

A. That you must answer to some tribunal for your violations of right.

B. Yes; I am accountable to my fellow-men. In organized communities, I am accountable to the laws of the land; in other situations, to whoever I may injure.

A. If the laws of the land encourage your neighbor to steal your property, does that make his theft virtuous?

B. No.

A. Then your neighbor sins against something besides the laws of the land. There must, therefore, be some other accountability, besides accountability to them. Besides; the law can take no cognizance of thefts which are never discovered. Are all things which you can do without discovery, innocent? Please to tell me; for I wish to know whether I can *safely* meet you in the night, where you might knock my brains out without detection.

B. For what I do in secret, I am accountable to the law of my own mind, which condemns and punishes with remorse, every violation of right.

A. How do I know what the law of your mind is,—whether it forbids murder,—whether it may not change with circumstances?

B. You may presume that my mind is like yours.

A. By no means, if you acknowledge no other accountability,—if you feel at liberty, when no witnesses are present, to do everything to which you can reconcile your own mind. Men's minds sometimes become reconciled to very strange doings. Do you not believe that the universal practise of virtue would secure the happiness of the world?

B. Certainly I do; for that is implied in the very idea of virtue.

A. In order to this security, must not all men hold themselves accountable to some less varying tribunal than the law of their own minds?

B. So it would seem.

A. What do you think of ingratitude, envy, revenge?

B. They are vices.

A. Men are accountable, then, to a tribunal which can take cognizance of the thoughts of their hearts.

B. Yes; to those principles of right, which are eternal and immutable; in other words, to virtue itself.

A. Principles of right! What can *principles* do, except as they are apprehended and acted upon by some mind?

B. Nothing, I confess.

A. Is this your idea of accountability—that we are accountable to that which can do nothing, and therefore, to all practical purposes, is nothing? How does this differ from no accountability at all?

B. We are accountable to these principles as apprehended by *our own minds*.

A. That is, to the *law* of our own minds. How do I know how you apprehend them? Must we go over that ground again?

B. It is needless. We must be accountable to them as apprehended by some other mind.

A. And this is the same as being accountable to *that mind*.

B. Certainly.

A. And as virtue is the same in all, we must all be accountable to *the same* mind. There must be a mind, then, which can and does take cognizance of all the deeds, and all the thoughts, of all intelligent beings.

B. I must grant it.

A. As you say, then, we are accountable to the eternal, immutable principles of right; to virtue; to goodness itself; not, however, imaginary and inefficient, but substantial, living, intelligent, ever present, all-seeing, and omnipotent. The idea of virtue, when fully comprehended by the mind, includes in itself the idea of accountability to God; and he who does not feel this, but imperfectly understands what virtue is.

No. XII.

A sense of accountability to God is necessary, in order that our idea of virtue be complete. Without it, right and wrong, duty, obligation, justice, and the like, are words which we can never understand to our own satisfaction, because accountability to God is involved in the only clear idea which these words can express. Conscience, therefore, requires us to believe that we are accountable to God; because without this belief, we can never be such men as we know we ought to be. I do not say that all men actually see this; but that no man can *innocently* be ignorant of it. Nor do I assert, that there can be no morality which will answer the ordinary purposes of civil intercourse, without this conviction; but only that believers must be so numerous, and so much under the influence of

this belief, as to form that public opinion and those other analogous influences, which may serve as props to the foundationless morality of the disbeliever and the sceptic.

This argument, drawn from, or rather included in, the demands of the conscience, I am persuaded, is the foundation on which the faith of the great multitude of believers actually rests; and without which, there is no efficient faith in the divine existence.

There are other arguments, however, in proof of the same doctrine, which it may be well to mention, though it would be foreign to my purpose to dwell upon them.

Paley has proved, from the marks of design which the universe exhibits, that some being exists, wise enough to plan, and powerful enough to make, the universe. More than this, his argument does not prove. It is conscience, which requires us to regard him as absolutely and infinitely perfect.

The unity of system in the universe proves *one* ground or cause of its existence. I do not now refer to the adaptation of the different parts to produce one result—that belongs, so far as we can find it, to the preceding argument,—but I refer to that unity which we take for granted, whenever we undertake to investigate its laws, and by our approaches towards the discovery of which, we estimate the success of our investigations. Newton, for example, had he not presumed that the system of the universe was *one*, would never have thought of referring the fall of an apple and the motions of the planets to the same law of attraction. It is conscience, however, which clothes with the attributes of personality and moral perfection, the one-ground of existence which this argument proves.

Self-existence, i. e. the existence of something which is not made to exist by any cause out of itself, must be taken for granted somewhere. If the universe has no creator, then *it* is self-existent. We see that the finite beings with which we are acquainted are not self-existent; and the supposition of an infinite series of them, i. e. of an infinity actually counted, involves a contradiction. This drives us to the conclusion that there is some self-existent ground of their being; which conscience requires us to regard as God.

What is existence,—considered apart from its modifications? What is it *to be*? Not to be a *man*, or to be a *tree*,—but what is that *existence*, which is common to all things and the same in all things that exist? What does the word mean? Think of this in connection with the awful name, I AM, and its synonym, JEHOVAH. Combine with any clear idea which may arise from such meditations, the propriety of gratitude for existence and its attendant blessings, and the necessity of referring them all to some personal, intelligent, intentional author, in order to be grateful for them, and thus you attain the idea of God.

What is power, efficiency, causation? Brown, in his treatise on Cause and Effect, taking for granted that we can have no ideas

which do not come to us through the senses, proves that constant connection is the only idea we have of power. How; from his premises, could he arrive at any other conclusion? For what, besides constant connection, do we ever see with our eyes? Brown's reasoning, however, is unsatisfactory, as all reasoning from the same premises must be; for the very uniformity with which certain events follow certain other events, is itself a phenomenon, which, we cannot avoid believing, has a cause. To this cause, we give the name of *power*, or efficiency. Now, the wood opens, because the wedge enters; and the wedge enters, because the beetle falls upon it; and so on, for a long series. But if we would avoid the contradiction of supposing an infinite number of instruments actually counted, we must admit some original source of power; and where can we even imagine it to be, but in a personal, self-conscious *will*? But it is conscience which teaches us to regard this *person as worthy* of our love and service.

I believe all these arguments to be sound; but if any shall think otherwise, I shall not contend with them; for my present object is, to show that none of these arguments are sufficient, when considered apart from the requirements of conscience, to prove to us the existence of an all-perfect moral Governor of the universe.

No. XIII.

"A Lady in Paris, moving in the higher circles of life, of cultivated mind and of elegant manners, but a disciple of the infidel philosophy, recently lost, in a fatal duel, her son, her only child; "and she was a widow." The Countess of ———, a Christian lady, sought her friend. She found the bereaved widow on her couch, cold, silent, restless, melancholy, and on the verge of despair. The philosophy of this world had forsaken her. The Countess began to speak of the refuge which the soul finds in addressing itself to God in time of trouble; to a Being so great, and good, and tender. The wretched parent turned on her a vacant stare, and said, "Did you speak of God? Who is He? Where is He? What is He? I know nothing of him." Struck by such an awful instance of infidelity, in such circumstances, the Countess answered not; for she felt in a moment that she could do nothing to restore such a moral ruin. Her interval of silence was an interval of prayer, that God would take this mighty work into his hands. Acting in this spirit, she opened her New Testament, and begged her to allow her to read a few passages from a book which had been useful to herself in her own recent afflictions. She read from the Evangelists. The effect upon the poor widow was of a gentle, soothing nature. No remark, from either party, was made on the book itself. When the Countess rose to leave her friend, she said: "I perceive that

you are entirely ignorant of the only source of comfort, and I cannot impart it to you. Will you give me one proof of your confidence in my affection and sympathy?" "I will." "It is, to use one short prayer, in the words I give you; and to use it as often as you feel a new accession of despair, or a fresh agony of grief:—‘O Lord, enlighten thou me, that I may know thee.’”

“For many days the Countess continued her visits, and read the little book; and on every successive visit to her friend, she found an increasing attention to the subject read. They rarely had any conversation on religion; for the Countess found that whenever she attempted it, she could not make herself understood. She therefore confined herself to reading, accompanied by secret prayer for the divine blessing. She was more encouraged in her hope of success, because she was assured by her friend, that she used the short prayer constantly; and when she did not know where to turn, or how to disengage her thoughts from the horrors of the past, she found relief in repeating the short prayer.

“After these daily readings had continued for some time, the bereaved mother began to express more distinctly the effect of what she heard: “Your book told me such and such a thing yesterday. That thought has followed me ever since. I wish you would leave it with me till to-morrow.” The Countess could not consent. She had two motives in her refusal: she hoped to increase the desire by delay; and she did not, at that time, wish the book to fall into the hands of an infidel sister, who had all her life influenced the mind of this unhappy widow. She therefore told her the book had belonged to a dear friend, and was never confided to any second person. The desire to possess this wonder-working book became stronger; and the following note was sent:—“Can you not lend me your invaluable treasure a few hours? I will not be unreasonable: it shall be returned to you soon.” It was lent, and returned with the following note:—“I have been deeply affected by your generous confidence in leaving with me a book so precious to you. I dare not keep it any longer; but pray let me have a Bible. It shall never leave me. It shall be my guide, my support; perhaps, one day, my consolation! O when shall I have obtained that holy joy! You shall know of it, that your heavenly charity may be rewarded. Do not leave me to myself. I seem to feel that I shall understand your object. O my God, give me strength and perseverance!”

“The Bible having been delayed a few days, the following note was sent:—“Permit me, my dear —, to remind you of your promise, to send me a Bible. Our last conversation did me much good. It went to the source of my disquietudes. I feel as though I could repose myself in God with confidence. Sometimes I feel as if I could love him with all my soul, while I ask him with fervency to give the illumination I so much want. I do not, I cannot doubt, that he will communicate the light that is necessary to my feeble understanding.”

"The Bible was procured and sent ; after which this note was written :—" I cannot thank you sufficiently for providing me with the only occupation of which I am capable ; but I cannot tell you that your present brought consolation to my wounded heart. I must acknowledge, that after reading it, I am more deeply afflicted. I am even more sorrowful, more dejected, than before I read it. Shall I tell you why ? I am led to look back upon my past life with horror ; and the dreadful thought suggests itself,—' Is it not probable that my sins brought on my child his awful catastrophe ? O my God, was I indeed the cause of all he suffered in life and death ? I can only weep abundantly. Divine grace must do for me."

"The Countess addressed to her a letter of an encouraging nature, opening to her the freeness and fulness of the gospel. It was thus acknowledged :—" Your letter has made me weep much ; but do not repent of having written it ; for the tears were the gentlest and kindest I ever shed. My heart is riveted to that one phrase,—' able to save *to the uttermost*.' I thank you, I thank you, for having shed such a drop of balm on my wounds. I want to talk with you on my sorrows, and my *hopes* ; if you can believe that I ought to have any *hope*. O yes, yes ; I have indeed hope, although it is mingled with sorrow. But mercy, mercy !"

"Here terminates the correspondence, but not the intercourse. The Countess had an interesting interview with her friend. She found that the Spirit of God had indeed begun a good work, and was gradually leading her mind into all the truth. Grief and despair on the loss of her son had given way to a strong anxiety to understand the word of God. This new study absorbed the whole soul of the mother. She said she read it incessantly, but without knowing how far she properly understood it ; but when she met with a passage that she did not understand, she returned to the place where she had comprehended the sense, and continued her reading till she again encountered the difficulty ; and then she uttered her first prayer, ' O Lord, give me light that I may know thee.' She remained at that point, without attempting to proceed, until she had obtained a knowledge of the passage. ' Then,' said she, ' I often find more force and beauty and information in that which had just confounded me, than in all I had understood before.' She said also : ' This book is my nightly comfort, as well as my daily occupation. When I cannot sleep, I desire my female servant to bring me my book, and place the candle at my pillow ; and so the night becomes no more tedious and gloomy.'"

"Attempts were made by her sister to lead back this interesting woman to the darkness and despair of the infidel philosophy ; but in vain. She reads the Bible, and scarcely anything else ; and lives to adorn its doctrine."

I must request all friends of evangelical religion to consider seriously the following questions :

1. Did this lady, in receiving and valuing the Bible as she did, act wisely, or foolishly?
2. If you say she acted wisely, does not this imply that she had sufficient evidence of its truth to justify her in receiving it?
3. Her senses informed her, only that such a book existed, and that there were such and such words in it. How, upon the principles of that philosophy which will believe nothing but on testimony which comes in through the senses, was it possible that she should have sufficient evidence to justify her belief?
4. If her conviction of the truth be referred to the Holy Spirit,—is not that philosophy, the principles of which the Holy Spirit must violate in order to produce such effects, unchristian and false?

No. XIV.

“But you require us to take so many things for granted!”

To be sure I do—for instance, that you exist, that you are not insane, nor asleep, and that your claim to rank as a rational being is not altogether imaginary,—either of which assertions you would find it difficult to prove, without taking something for granted which is no more evident than they are.

“But you require us to take for granted, not only facts of which we are conscious, but doctrines on which you build your whole system.”

Yes. In Mathematics, you must grant the possibility of drawing one right line which shall be equal to another, etc. In experimental philosophy, you must grant that some confidence may be reposed in your eyes and other organs of sense. In moral philosophy, you must grant that there is such a thing as right and such a thing as wrong. None of these can be proved, by anything more certain or better understood than themselves. Of the necessity of postulates I have spoken before.

“But in the course of your reasonings, you leave gaps in your argument, which you take for granted, either that we shall not see, or shall fill up for ourselves.”

The latter. To answer every question which might be asked on every point, would be an endless task; and even to answer every question which a reasonable man would ask himself before embracing the doctrines of these numbers, would be to write, not merely a book, but a very huge one. I must therefore content myself with just setting up way-marks along the path of Christian Philosophy,—endeavoring to place them at such distances and in such positions, that the traveller who has his eyes open and is disposed to use them, may easily see from one to another. In plain English, I must often refer such as esteem these essays worth their attention, to their own

minds, not only for proof and illustration of what is advanced, but for supplying intermediate links in the chain of argument. I shall take for granted, too, that Christianity, as a system, and its several truths in particular, command the veneration and assent of my readers. A sufficient reason for doing this is, that in this way we come at the most important points I have in view, not more conclusively, but much more directly and conveniently. So much for explanation and apology.

In my last Number, I told the story of a French lady, who had lived an infidel, but who received the Bible at last, not on any external testimony, but on her own knowledge of its adaptation to her moral wants. Her case is by no means singular in its principle. Within a few years, thousands in the Society and Sandwich Islands have received the Bible "in the love of it." They *know* in whom they have believed. They have seen and yielded to the force of evidence which satisfies them, and which ought to satisfy any rational man, that the Bible ought to be received as the word of God. But what do they know of Clement, and Polycarp, and Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus, and Origen, and Cyprian, and Jerome, and Eusebius, and Theophylact, or even of Paley's "Evidences of Christianity?" Figure to yourself a warm hearted Moravian, entering a snow cabin in Greenland, or the hut of a Negro slave in Surinam, or of a Hottentot, and offering to prove to the inmates, by quotations from the Fathers, or from those who quoted them, that the books of the New Testament were indeed written by those whose names they bear; to discuss the various readings of different manuscripts; to substantiate from these sources, the general integrity of the sacred text; to establish the credibility of the apostles as witnesses; and to defend, by all necessary philological arguments, the faithfulness of the version he puts into their hands. How fast do you think he would make converts?—Suppose he makes use of another kind of evidence,—that which is found in Newton on the Prophecies, or in Paley's *Horae Paulinae*. How much better would this be? There is something closely bordering on the ridiculous, in the very thought of attempting to prove the truth of Christianity, in any such mode, to thousands of those who most need to be assured of its truth. Read the journal of any successful missionary, and you will learn that converts are made, only by arguments different *in kind* from those I have mentioned. He leads them to see, by the light of their own consciousness, that they are such sinners as the Bible describes, and that they need, in order to be righteous and happy, just such a salvation as the Bible offers. Their consciences tell them that they ought to be, what they can become only by receiving the Bible as the word of God. He confirms all with "Thus saith the Lord;" and they see, by the light which he has placed in their minds, that it becomes God so to speak. They submit. They receive the Scriptures. And in doing this, they not merely *guess*, but they *know*, that they do right. And how does their faith differ from that of the great

mass of the pious in Christian lands? And if there are any among them who will "not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," or any other form or quantity of external evidence should be urged upon them.

Let me not be misunderstood. The testimony of the Fathers, and the labors of those who have compiled from them, are of great value; and when, as is not unfrequently the case, it becomes expedient to answer an historically wise "fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit," they are indispensable. The arguments of Paley, in the two works to which I have alluded, I consider as absolutely conclusive; but believing all that they prove will no more make one a Christian, than believing the *authenticity* of Euclid's Elements will make one a Geometer.

No. XV.

The fifteenth Number already, and so many things to say yet! It is even so; but how many of them I shall say, time only can determine. At least, it is time to make some direct practical application. And if I mistake not, the application of the doctrines of some of the last Numbers to the study of doctrinal theology and the management of religious controversy is tolerably easy.

All our knowledge of moral subjects rests, ultimately, on the requirements of conscience. Without these, we may distinguish actions into prudent and imprudent, but not into right and wrong; we may prove the existence of an architect of the universe, but not of a God, worthy of love, confidence, and service—for how could we prove *worthiness*, without a knowledge of right and wrong?—We may prove the authenticity of the Scriptures, but not that it would be *wrong* to reject them. All rests on certain fundamental truths, which we take for granted for the best possible reason,—because we see that we *ought* to do it. We cannot be such men as we ought to be, without doing it.

Now conscience can never authorize us to violate the requirements of conscience. It can authorize only what harmonizes with its dictates. It can authorise no inference at variance with that sense of right, in which all moral reasoning has its foundation. If, then, we find our reasonings, or the reasonings of others, leading us to conclusions which are inconsistent with what we know to be our duty, we may know, from this inconsistency, that such reasonings are unsound. It may conduce to our satisfaction and that of others, if we can place a finger upon the sophism; but this is by no means necessary. We have the same authority for rejecting the conclusion, which we have for reasoning on moral subjects at all,—the authority of conscience.

minds, not only for proof and illustration of what is advanced, but for supplying intermediate links in the chain of argument. I shall take for granted, too, that Christianity, as a system, and its several truths in particular, command the veneration and assent of my readers. A sufficient reason for doing this is, that in this way we come at the most important points I have in view, not more conclusively, but much more directly and conveniently. So much for explanation and apology.

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mass of the pious in Christian lands? And if there are any among them who will "not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," or any other form or quantity of external evidence should be urged upon them.

Let me not be misunderstood. The testimony of the Fathers, and the labors of those who have compiled from them, are of great value; and when, as is not unfrequently the case, it becomes expedient to answer an historically wise "fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit," they are indispensable. The arguments of Paley, in the two works to which I have alluded, I consider as absolutely conclusive; but believing all that they prove will no more make one a Christian, than believing the *authenticity* of Euclid's Elements will make one a Geometer.

No. XV.

The fifteenth Number already, and so many things to say yet! It is even so; but how many of them I shall say, time only can determine. At least, it is time to make some direct practical application. And if I mistake not, the application of the doctrines of some of the last Numbers to the study of doctrinal theology and the management of religious controversy is tolerably easy.

All our knowledge of moral subjects rests, ultimately, on the requirements of conscience. Without these, we may distinguish actions into prudent and imprudent, but not into right and wrong; we may prove the existence of an architect of the universe, but not of a God, worthy of love, confidence, and service—for how could we prove *worthiness*, without a knowledge of right and wrong?—We may prove the authenticity of the Scriptures, but not that it would be *wrong* to reject them. All rests on certain fundamental truths, which we take for granted for the best possible reason,—because we see that we *ought* to do it. We cannot be such men as we ought to be, without doing it.

Now conscience can never authorize us to violate the requirements of conscience. It can authorize only what harmonizes with its dictates. It can authorize no inference at variance with that sense of right, in which all moral reasoning has its foundation. If, then, we find our reasonings, or the reasonings of others, leading us to conclusions which are inconsistent with what we know to be our duty, we may know, from this inconsistency, that such reasonings are unsound. It may conduce to our satisfaction and that of others, if we can place a finger upon the sophism; but this is by no means necessary. We have the same authority for rejecting the conclusion, which we have for reasoning on moral subjects at all,—the authority of conscience.

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The immutability of God, for example, is evidently involved in our very idea of God; and we need to believe that he is immutable, in order that we may confidently trust in him to fulfil his promises, and to be always the friend of virtue; for how could we rely upon this, if we suspected that he might change? But if any shall infer that, as God never changes, prayer to him must be useless, we are authorized to reject their conclusion, whether we can point out where the fallacy is or not. We know prayer to be a duty. Conscience sanctions, at every step, the reasoning which proves it to be a duty. We feel it to be impossible to pray as we ought, unless we believe that God is the "rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The same is not true of that course of reasoning which proves that prayer is useless. When you arrive at the conclusion, if not before, you discover that your mind is dragged along, merely by what appears to be logic. You do not feel,—you cannot feel—that you would be doing wrong to doubt if you could. You may know by this, which of the two conclusions respecting prayer you are to adopt. It must be that which conscience sanctions.

We are required to believe in the entire and universal control of God over all persons and all events, so far as to lay a suitable foundation for gratitude and trust; so far that we may refer "every good and perfect gift" to him, and feel assured that "all things shall work together for good, to them that love God." This conscience requires. But we are not so to hold this doctrine, as to diminish our responsibility for whatever we do, or to make him in any degree chargeable with our sins. There are those who do not know how to answer the logic which leads to such conclusions; but, whatever a wicked heart may say, no man's conscience demands such a belief.

We are to receive the doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints," so as to repose confidence in God, not only for acceptance when obedient, but for the gift of an obedient spirit; not only for success when watchful, but for the gift of watchfulness; not only for acceptance when we have endured to the end, but for grace to endure; for otherwise, ours is a spirit of unbecoming self-dependence. But we are not so to believe it, as to diminish our sense of the necessity of continual watchfulness, and of unceasing efforts after purity of heart.

Conscience requires that we regard ourselves as accountable to God. We are therefore to believe ourselves free in respect to our will and voluntary conduct, so far as this is necessary to a sense of responsibility. But we are not so to hold this doctrine, as will lead us to attribute any good done by us, or look for any good to be done by us, to the independent, unassisted determinations of our own will; for this is inconsistent with that entire reference of all good things to God as their author, which conscience clearly demands as a foundation for suitable gratitude.

We are so to refer our own salvation to the electing love of God, as entirely to exclude boasting on our part, and to lay us under obligations to him, not only for the provision made and offered, but for

our acceptance of it. But we are not so to hold this doctrine, as to doubt the entire sufficiency of this provision, and freedom and sincerity of this offer, to ourselves, or to any of the human race; for a fault on either hand would destroy our idea of God, and substitute for him, a being who would not be the self-moving and overflowing source of all good.

It is thus that the Bible presents these doctrines; and when presented otherwise, so as to bear up any of these forbidden inferences, they become other and unscriptural doctrines. In this scriptural and rational form, with such limitations as I have pointed out, they are *practically* held by all Evangelical Christians; though often clothed in different forms of speech, and without any formal mention of the limitations. And nothing is more common than warm and protracted controversies on points on which the *practical faith* of both parties is the same.

I cannot close without remarking, that one of the most prominent theological controversies* among us arises wholly from a disregard of this principle. The contest relates merely to certain logical forms, for which reason and conscience furnish no corresponding realities. It is like the old controversy, "whether the world was made in six days because six is a perfect number; or whether six is a perfect number because the world was made in six days."

No. XVI.

I am fully persuaded that there is a philosophy, which, though it will not explain, nor attempt to explain, those mysteries of godliness which lie beyond the reach of human faculties, will yet be found to harmonize with the actual phenomena of a Christian life; and that such is not the character of that philosophy which has long been taught in our seminaries of learning, has been carried from them into the pulpit, and thence made its way through all the ranks of society. I am fully persuaded, too, that this false philosophy is a pernicious fetter to the mind in the investigation of religious truth; that men are pious, when they are pious at all, in violation of its principles; that most controversies among evangelical Christians arise from the various modes in which they attempt, all equally in vain, to reconcile the known truths of religion with it; that it gives their present form and substance to most of the fatal errors that prevail; that Robert Dale Owen and his associates merely follow out its principles, with rigid logical accuracy, to their legitimate conclusion; that it tends, and has powerfully operated, to give a wrong direction to the minds of our statesmen, and to let in that flood of corrupt principles and practice, which now threatens to sweep away the

* The New Haven controversy.—*Editor.*

foundations of our free institutions; and that in many other ways, it tends to make us slaves of time and sense, and to give the reins to ambition, avarice, and sensuality. I know that, with this philosophy, and as a part of it, many things are taught which are utterly at war with it; that many truths, suggested and sustained by the moral principles of the teachers and the learners, counteract, and sometimes nearly or wholly neutralize its influence; and that whatever valuable acquisitions are made in morals, in the exact sciences, and in the fine arts, must, from the nature of those studies, involve the principles of a higher and purer philosophy; but these antidotes merely prevent the poison from destroying us. They do not render it wholesome for the mind. If therefore these essays shall assist a few minds in finding a safer path, I shall be abundantly rewarded. And of this I am not wholly without hope; especially as I learn that these essays are copied into several very respectable periodicals.

Before proceeding further, I find that convenience requires the introduction of several definitions. I begin with

REASON. For this word, I shall adopt the definition of our great lexicographer, Dr. Webster, who says it is "a faculty of the mind, by which it distinguishes truth from falsehood, and good from evil, and which enables the possessor to deduce inferences from facts or from propositions." It is necessary, however, to distinguish between *truth* and *facts*. Questions of *fact*,—e. g. whether a certain thing exists, or a certain act was done, or under what circumstances it was done,—are settled, not by reason, but by the testimony of our own senses, or of those who have learned it by the testimony of their senses. Truths, however, as of morals or mathematics, are distinguished as truths by reason, and not by the direct or indirect testimony of the senses. Who would not see the absurdity of calling witnesses to prove under oath, that two and two are four, or that things equal to the same are equal to each other, or that we ought to do as we would that others should do unto us? These are truths; necessarily and unchangeably and eternally true. The supposition that they are false involves an absurdity. The faculty by which we see this, and thus distinguish them from falsehoods, is *reason*.

Again, we must distinguish between *truths* and *probabilities*. That which is *probable*, may be true, or it may be false, and the decision that it is *probable* implies that we do not know which. Probability relates properly to facts, and not to truths. We say that it is probable that such or such an event will take place; but no rational man says seriously, "it is probable that if to equals, equals be added, the sums will be equal," or, "it is probable that we ought to love our neighbors as ourselves." Questions of probability are not settled by seeing the absurdity of the contrary supposition, or the necessary connection of what is asserted with some self-evident truth. They are settled only by testimony; and they exist, only when we are considering testimony which is not conclusive.

But again, reason is a faculty—by which we *distinguish good*

from evil; in other words, the faculty by which we distinguish moral truths from the opposite falsehoods. This part of the definition is indeed included in the other; yet, as many would not see it to be included, it deserves a separate mention. We have seen already, that moral truths are necessary, and therefore eternal and unchangeable. They are perceived as such by the reason.

Once more; reason is the faculty, "which enables the possessor to deduce inferences from facts or from propositions." Observe, it is not the faculty *by which facts are learned*, but that which enables us to deduce inferences from them. Now, how can we infer anything from a fact, but by getting hold of some of the necessary truths which are involved in that fact? On this point, I must refer the reader to what Dugald Stewart says, in the 2d volume of his *Philosophy of the Human Mind*, on the laws of human belief and elements of human reason. See especially, page 40, and onward.—Of reason, as enabling us to deduce inferences from propositions, the whole of Euclid's *Elements*, and indeed the whole circle of mathematical science, is an example.

No. XVII.

IDEA. *Ideas* are the product of *the reason*, and not of the senses.

I wish to restore this word to the signification which it had among thinking men before the time of Locke, in which some have used it to the present time, and which has been rapidly gaining ground for several years past. I would distinguish between an *idea* and a *brain-image*. A clear idea does not mean a distinct picture, which we seem to behold. If it did, how could we have any *idea* of virtue, vice, spirit, thought, gravitation?—Neither is an idea an *opinion*. Indeed, I know not that any respectable writer uses it in this sense.

If the word *reason* is understood, I know not how to define the word *idea* better than I have done, by calling ideas the product of the reason. Think what reason is, what are the objects which it contemplates, and what are the results of its contemplations. These are *ideas*.

The definition of a triangle, a circle, an ellipse, or any other mathematical figure, contains an idea. We have the idea of a circle, when we see clearly what a circle is,—what it must be in order to be a circle. In this are virtually included, and from this may be deduced, all the propositions concerning a circle.

A *law contemplated* is an idea. For instance, arithmetical or geometrical progression, gravitation. Kepler's *law* concerning the

revolutions of the planets, and the *law* of accelerated motion in falling bodies, when contemplated by the mind, are ideas.

The moral *law*, that you should do to others as you would that others should do to you, when contemplated, is an idea. So also, we have an idea of justice, benevolence, or any other virtue, when we see the *law* to which we must conform in order to be just, benevolent, etc. We have an idea of any particular thing, when we contemplate the *laws* to which it must be subject in order to be *that thing*. We have an idea of a certain *genus*, when we contemplate the *laws* which must be observed in order to belong to that genus.

An idea is always a self-consistent whole. An actual existence corresponding to it is possible. There may be ideas of whatever exists, or may exist; but we can have no idea, properly speaking, of a Centaur; for, as Palæphatus says, "neither could the horse live on the food which the man would eat, nor could the man eat the food which would nourish the horse." In order to keep the *horse* part alive, the laws of man's being must be violated in the formation of the head and adjoining parts, and then those parts would cease to be *human*.

The *perfect idea* of anything is, the view which the Supreme Reason, the Divine Mind, has of it, and had of it before creation.

LAW. The sense in which I use the word *law* will be manifest, from what I have said already.

Of the use of the senses in acquiring ideas, or investigating laws, I have spoken in a previous Number, and shall speak more minutely hereafter.

No. XVIII.

I ought to have said in my last Number, that a *law contemplated* is an *idea* in the *mind that contemplates it*. I should have quoted, had it lain before me at the time, the following sentence of the father of inductive philosophy, lord Bacon: "Quod in natura *naturata* Lex, in natura *naturante* IDEA dicitur." This, it should be noticed, is a formal definition of the word *idea*, in its application to the material universe; and it is substantially the same that I have given,—a *law contemplated*. I shall now speak of the word

UNDERSTANDING. This, Webster agrees with Locke in defining, "the faculty of the human mind by which it apprehends the real state of things presented to it." The last half of the definition I omit, as meaning nothing not included in the first. It is, indeed, a mere attempt to explain the first, which is rendered unsuccessful by a misuse of the word *idea*.

By the *understanding*, then, we apprehend the *real state* of the *things* around us. This faculty has nothing to do with *necessary*

truths, as such. They belong to the reason. By the understanding, we apprehend the existence of such and such things, and the modes, conditions and relations in which they exist. This faculty is ever conversant with matters of fact, as reason is with necessary truths.

The understanding, as some have defined it, is "the faculty which judges according to sense."

The understanding always refers to something else as its authority, in all its decisions. It rests upon testimony; the testimony of our own senses, or of those who have learned by their senses. Of course, its decisions may admit of different degrees of certainty; and the proofs on which it decides, may with propriety be confirmed by an oath. Its decisions often are only *probable*, not absolutely certain. Perhaps, in strict accuracy, they are always so; though often the probability is so strong as to exclude all *reasonable* doubt. In this it is contra-distinguished from reason, the decisions of which are always attended with conclusive evidence that the contrary supposition is absurd.

The Understanding is the faculty by which we classify and generalize; i. e. by which we arrange together, under a common name, those *things* in which we see resemblances. Hence, also, it is the faculty by which we form *general rules*, which we *expect* will prove true in any given instance, but from which we do not see that there may not be exceptions. The *reason* has nothing to do with such rules. It is concerned with *principles*, which are necessarily and universally true—from which there can be no exceptions. Hence, by the way, it is of vital importance that our moral principles be regarded as results of the *reason*, and not of the understanding.

A great part of whatever difficulty there is in distinguishing between these two faculties arises from the fact, that they frequently co-operate, so that many of our thoughts are the result of neither singly, but of both. Whatever object is presented to the senses, and through them to the understanding, there is a tendency,—stronger and more active in some minds than in others, but really existing in all,—to seek for the laws of its being, the ideas of the pure reason to which it must conform in order to be what it is; and when this search has been successful, that *thing* is regarded by us as a realization of that *idea*, and that idea is no more regarded by us as a mere idea, but as the essential nature of *that thing*. Of this the whole science of physics is an exemplification, whether learned at school from books, or learned, really learned, by the unschooled man in the ordinary business of life.

Those who are sufficiently familiar with metaphysical studies to feel any interest in these Numbers, will not expect that anything pertaining to mind can be described as visible things may be. All that can be done is to give such hints, that the student may search for himself, and find the object of our inquiry in his own mind. Nor can he always do this in a few moments. It is often necessary for him to question his own consciousness many a time and oft, after

the idea begins to dawn upon his mind, before he can rationally expect to see it in the full light of day. Whoever is willing to arrive at knowledge thus, I trust will find in himself ere long, something answering to my description of reason, and something answering to my description of understanding. And the discovery will be worth what it will cost. It will unlock at once many of the mysteries of mind, and let in a flood of light upon the fundamental principles of every art and every science. And to nothing will its application be more extensive, more satisfactory, or more useful, than to that greatest of sciences, the science of duty and happiness.

No. XIX.

IMAGINATION. Please to call to mind the definition of an *idea*. Consider that it is possible to have an idea of such a man as never yet existed; for instance, of such an one as may be born to-morrow, or as may not be born at all; who will be distinguished by characteristic traits from all other men, past, present, and to come. If your idea of this man is perfect, a complete, self-consistent whole, you may know how he will feel, think, speak, and act, in any given circumstances. You may write his conversations for him; such as he will actually hold, should he ever exist, and be placed in such circumstances. This is Imagination—the imagination of Shakspeare.

There is such a thing as *expression* in the human form and countenance; as if the character of the soul governed the formation of the body,—as, to a certain extent, it doubtless does. When one has a clear Shaksperian idea of a certain soul, it is possible that he should form the idea of a body which will express the character of that soul. This is the imagination of the statuary and the painter; of Leonardo de Vinci, who could paint the Apostles, but, after many trials, declared it impossible to paint Christ.

If you understand me so far, you can tell for yourself, what is the imagination of the musician, the architect, the gardener, and the adept in every department of the fine arts.

If you have attained unto clear *ideas* of righteousness,—of the Law of God as applied to the regulation of your own heart,—you can tell what your life must be, in order to conform to that law. You can determine beforehand, what your thoughts and feelings and words and deeds must be, in any circumstances in which you may be placed. This is the imagination of the *good man*; without the exercise of which, no man is good. Here is the connection between the fine arts and religion. Here are the grounds on which it has been well said of Luther, that his whole life was a *poem*, of which he was the hero; and on which the same may be said of every good

man, so far as his life is spent in endeavoring to realize, in his own person, those forms of excellence which exist in his imagination.—I have written no paragraph, more important to be understood and remembered than this.

FANCY. If you read what most metaphysicians have written upon Fancy and Imagination, you will find these words continually invading each other's province, and will be in doubt, whether the authors mean to express the same idea by them both, or not. Late writers have felt this evil, and there is now a tendency in the literary world to give to each word its appropriate meaning. If this tendency continues till a definition of fancy is formed, corresponding to something in the mind which is not imagination, it will be this: Fancy is the faculty by which the mind forms images or representations of things, out of materials which have come in through the senses. It bears a relation to the understanding analogous to that of the imagination to the reason. It is the faculty which has sometimes been tolerably well defined under the name of imagination, and to which, under that name, performances have been attributed, to which it is wholly inadequate.

Take Stewart's *Philosophy*, Vol. I. p. 412, and read how Milton formed his description of the Garden of Eden. Leap over some difficulties, and suppose that Milton had actually seen all the images out of which his garden is made. Suppose all needful abstractions performed, and all the materials of the garden, and ten thousand more, laying before his mind, ready for use. He is now to begin the work of selection, and of combining them into the garden. How is he to proceed? Shall he take them hap-hazard, try them together, and see how they look; and if not satisfied, knock down this cob-house and build another upon the same *no-principles*, and so on till he *happens* upon the right construction? He would never make a garden of Eden in this way. There must be the *reason*—the *idea* of Divine Goodness, of innocence and holiness. The expression of God's approbation of the faultless pair and of his rich bounty towards them in providing a residence for them must be *imagined*; and this *imagination* must suggest the character and arrangement of the ornaments with which fancy may decorate the garden. That poetry which deserves the name, has for its foundation, or rather for its substance, a science as deep and demonstrative, and a logic as severe, as geometry itself. And so has all real eloquence. Without the imagination, the offspring of the reason, for its guide, the *fancy* can only do the work of a madman's mind,—of one who has *lost his reason*.

No. XX.

CONSCIENCE. This word is used in several senses. It is sometimes nearly synonymous with *consciousness*. It then refers to our views of our own conduct and intentions; to the judgments which we pass upon our own characters. In this sense, conscience is not a faculty, but an act; and is as liable to be wrong, as any other act.

Again; *conscience* is used to designate the judgments which we form concerning our obligations to do certain things. These judgments involve, or ought to involve, the exercise both of the reason and the understanding, and are frequently warped by our likings and dislikes. In this sense, conscience is very often erroneous.

In a third sense, conscience is the *reason*, exercised on moral truths. The truths of morality are, in their own nature, imperative. To see them clearly and fully, is to see our obligation to conform to them. When this is not seen, we have, at best, but an imperfect view of them:—if I should say a false view, it would be hard to disprove it. In this sense, conscience is a safe guide. Its decisions always relate to *principles*; and to *actions* no further than they are seen to involve those principles, and to take their character from them.

WILL. This is a perilous word. The theologian will adjust his spectacles anew at the very mention of it; for now, he will say to himself, “we shall find out whether he is a heretic or not.” Be it so. I must encounter the peril.

The *will* is the faculty which we are conscious of using, when we determine to do, or not to do, any particular act. There is no way of defining it, except by referring the reader to what has passed within himself on such occasions.

Contemplate steadily on what passes in your mind when you *will* to do a certain thing, and you will perceive that *will* differs essentially from mere desire, appetite, or inclination. You will see, too, that *desire* may be increased to ever so great intensity, and may be ever so predominant in the mind, without becoming *will*. It may, or it may not, be inseparably connected with the exercise of the will; but it is not the same thing. We never actually set about doing a thing, without some act of the mind by which we determine to do it, and which is different in kind from mere desire. Who does not see the difference between “I will do it,” and “I am willing to do it?”

You will perceive, too, that freedom, or, to use a term less liable to be misunderstood, spontaneity, is included in the very idea of *will*. All that surrounding circumstances can do, is to furnish inducements; perhaps strong, perhaps such as certainly will not be resisted, but still only inducements. After all, there must be a decision of your own, in which you act for yourself, and for which you are conscious of being responsible, before you will begin to take

measures to accomplish anything. This idea of the will is indeed an *idea*. Its possibility is seen by the reason, and its reality in our own persons is testified by consciousness. It is not, then, a dogma, to be reasoned *about*, but a *principle*, from which reasonings are to flow; but so to flow, as not to interfere with any requirement of the conscience.

You will see, also, that the *will* may be the acquiescing slave of the "things that are seen." The reason may be neglected. The things of this world may strike the senses. The understanding, the faculty which judges according to sense, may see in them the means of gratifying the appetites. And the will may uniformly and without resistance comply with these dictates of the understanding. The nature of the will, as will, as spontaneous, as a choosing faculty, is not destroyed; but it uniformly chooses according to the dictates of appetite and sense,—so that all its decisions are calculable by any mind that knows all the surrounding circumstances. This is the *enslaved* will; the unregenerate will; the "will of the flesh."

You will see, also, that it is not impossible for the will to act differently. It is possible that it should decide in view of, and according to, an *ideal law*, which is seen by the reason as a law which we ought to obey. "This is necessary, eternal and unchangeable truth," may be seen and felt as a sufficient ground for a decision. And this law may be one which human reason never would have seen, unless aided by a revelation from the Supreme Reason,—the Essential "Truth." This is the *regenerate* will, which "walks by faith, and not by sight."

You will see, also, in the very idea of *will*, a possibility of passing from one of these states to the other; not by a gradual approximation; not by a series of acts; but by one simple, indivisible, instantaneous act, which consists, not in resolving to pass, but in passing—in choosing, for the first time, according to the dictates of the reason acting as conscience. You will not see this possibility in the nature of the "will of the flesh," considered as such; but in the idea of *will*,—of that faculty which may be either carnal or spiritual.—Whether any, and if so, what aids from the "Father of spirits," are necessary in order that this transition may take place, you may be told in the Scriptures; and taking them for your guide, you may know by your own experience.

No. XXI.

FAITH. All created things are but the realizations of ideas, and all events but the exemplification of truths, which existed before creation, or rather, which are eternally present, in the Divine Mind. These truths, considered in their relation to events, are the physical.

and moral laws of the universe. Each event, when rightly understood, teaches us some law;—not some temporary arrangement, some expedient to get over a present difficulty, but some eternal and immutable law. The experiments of the inductive philosopher are all of them events, the happening of which he procures, that he may learn by them and in them the physical laws of the universe. The record of the experiments is perfect, only when it relates no extraneous and accidental circumstances, but states plainly those particulars in which the *law* appears.

The Bible, considered as a collection of precepts, is an announcement of the moral laws of the universe. Considered as a history, it is a record of events in which the moral laws of the universe are exhibited. And we are bound to believe the record is perfect; that it relates events, in which are developed all the laws which we need to understand; and so relates them, that the *law* need not, in any instance, be mistaken by the reader.

The Bible develops, not only the character of man, but of God, including all the laws by which he regulates his treatment of men. One object, at least, for which "the Word became flesh," was, that in the events of his history on earth, these laws might be more perfectly illustrated,—more fully taught. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

Some of the recorded facts of the Bible are, with respect to us, yet future: such as the resurrection of the body, and the retributions of another world. Yet the record comes to us with sufficient authority; and indeed it has been so confirmed by facts already past, in the resurrection of Christ, etc., that we have no excuse for not receiving them.

Now, what is faith? What is that *believing*, which the Bible requires of us, that we may be saved? Does it consist in believing that Jesus was crucified, as Annas and Caiaphas did? Or in believing that he was innocent, as Judas did? Or in believing any facts whatever, as mere facts? By no means. It is the "spiritual meaning" of these facts,—the truths, the laws, of which they are both proofs and instances,—that we must believe. The ideas of the reason, the moral laws of the universe, which these facts bring within our reach, or force upon our notice, must be seen, admitted, relied upon. It is not the mere fact that Christ died, but the character of God and man, as exhibited in his death, which has a transforming power over the hearts of believers. It is a reliance upon those truths which the Bible announces and exemplifies, which reason recognizes, which conscience sanctions. It is a reliance upon them, as what shall stand and bear us out in our adherence to them, when the heavens and the earth shall have passed away. Consider that moral truth differs from mathematical in this; that it is admitted, not because we see it to be *impossible*, but because we see it to be *wrong*, to believe otherwise,—and you will see that a right faith implies something right in the will. Facts, forms of speech, forms

of logic, and notions of the understanding, may be received without any moral benefit; but the harmony of the will with the reason, showing itself in the fearless reception of and adherence to "**THE TRUTH**," which is the essence of *faith*, cannot but bring salvation.

N. B. I have mentioned "the spiritual meaning of facts." I mean as I say. The *words*, in the historical parts of the Bible, have but one meaning,—to record the facts; but the facts have a meaning. Actions speak. They teach spiritual truths.

No. XXII.

It is time to think seriously of coming to a close; but I cannot persuade myself to stop till I have hinted an answer to the question, "What is the use of all this, even if it be true?"

To answer this question, we must keep in mind, that reason deals in *principles*,—in universal truths, to which no exceptions are even conceivable; the understanding, the faculty which judges according to sense, never can ascend higher than general rules, to which there may be exceptions. A rule is found to hold good so far as we have had experience; and from this fact we are led to presume that it will hold good in most cases. And the more numerous and careful our observations have been, the more confidence we feel in the conclusion. Every rule which is formed merely by generalizing what comes in through the senses, is liable to doubt; first, because our senses are not infallible, and may have misinformed us; and secondly, because our observations have not been so numerous and varied in their circumstances, as to render it certain that there may not be other circumstances, in which our rule will not hold good. And neither of these sources of uncertainty can ever be wholly avoided. Men must generalize, too, and form their general rules, from what their senses meet in the world; and those who are placed in different circumstances must of necessity generalize differently, and form different rules; all of which will rest on the same authority, and be equally entitled to the belief of those that form them.

If, then, all our knowledge rests upon the testimony of the senses, moral truths, the truths of religion, never can be, or at least never ought to be, to our minds, anything more than general rules, the correctness of which is *probable*, not absolutely certain, and to which there may be exceptions; and the confidence with which we ought to rely upon them, will be in proportion to our experience of their truth; that is, in early life, and in some circumstances through life, it ought to be very feeble.

Again; as men are placed in different circumstances, different

objects will strike their senses, they will be led to different generalizations, and form different general rules, different religions, all of equal authority—equally binding on those who make them. No man can be accountable for his religious belief; for it is forced upon him by the circumstances in which he is placed. And if circumstances have made a man so much of a philosopher that he understands all this, why, he is justified in being a sceptic.

Such, I maintain, are the logical results of the sensuous philosophy; and such are its actual fruits. To which of these abominable conclusions has it not led? Which of these sophisms is not made a rule of life under its authority? Look through the length and breadth of our country. Consider the doctrines which actually prevail and rule, and the arguments by which they are defended. What multitudes consider themselves as not responsible, even to God, for their faith, on the ground that various and contradictory doctrines are equally likely to be true, and that a man's belief is necessarily determined by his circumstances! What multitudes regard religion in the gross as something, the truth of which is, at most, only probable! And what countless multitudes believe, and practise accordingly, that its laws admit of exceptions, and that its strict requirements must now and then give way to circumstances! How this is exemplified in legislation, in commerce, in every department of business, in every condition of life! And yet the fundamental sophism is a part of the metaphysical creed of many, who see and deplore the results!

I do not believe I am extravagant in the extent of influence which I attribute to the sensuous philosophy. When I reflect how the most abstract terms of Aristotle and his followers have passed from the schools to the pulpit, the bar, the senate house, and through them into the common intercourse of man with man, till they are incorporated into the body of the language, and are "familiar in our mouths as household words," I cannot think such an influence impossible. Indeed, I need not appeal to this well known fact. I might show you hosts in each of our learned professions, in every station of society, in our seminaries of learning, from the university to the infant school, busily employed in teaching this philosophy in some of its forms and applications; and I have already referred to the wide diffusion and practical influence of the conclusions to which it leads. When we thus see the cause and the effect in close neighborhood, shall we doubt their connection?

I do not expect to exhaust this topic, but hope to give you a few more hints next week.

No. XXIII.

Though we should "call no man father," yet the opinions of able men should have some weight with us: and beyond all doubt it is lawful to commend the truth to the notice of others, by showing that men have embraced it whose names command respect. I shall therefore be justified in quoting Professor Stuart of Andover, as bearing witness to the correctness of my leading thoughts. I was not aware of his views, till I met an incidental mention of them in his exegesis of Rom. 8: 18—25. The passage will be found in the 2d Number of the Biblical Repository, p. 369. Of the argument in favor of immortality which he supposes the apostle to use in the passage on which he is commenting, he says:—"The argument may be named an *internal* one. It is an appeal to our very constitution, our intelligent, moral nature. Nor is it any the less probable, because it is an argument of such a kind; but rather the reverse. Belief, derived from the source of internal consciousness and the constitution of our nature, is evidently of higher certainty than what we call knowledge, viz. that which is derived from the perception of our senses, or is the result of a reasoning process. Belief of the nature which I have indicated, comprises in itself the first elements, the foundation principles, of all true knowledge."

Here we have a distinct recognition of several points: first, the imperfection of all knowledge derived from the senses. There may be "higher certainty." Secondly, the existence of another source of knowledge, from which we may be furnished with "arguments;" viz. "internal consciousness and the constitution of our nature;" or what I call *the reason*. Thirdly, that no knowledge deserves the name, is "true knowledge," until it is brought upon the "foundation" which reason furnishes. As we shall not quarrel about the name of this other "source" of knowledge, I do not see what we shall find to differ about, unless it be, to which source some particular belief is to be referred:—in other words, whether some particular belief has a claim to rank among our "true knowledge."

I have another object in quoting this passage. Professor Stuart asserts, and I think proves, that PAUL uses an argument which is not founded on the testimony of our senses, but derives its authority from another "source," of "higher authority." If so, Paul, writing under the guidance of inspiration, is on my side, and the question is settled. This prepares the way to give another answer to the question, "Of what use is all this, even if it be true?" It is of use, as Professor Stuart has used it, in understanding and explaining the Scriptures. Had it been a part of his metaphysical creed, that we can have no knowledge which does not come in through the senses, he must have found some other meaning for the words of the apostle. We shall never interpret the sacred writers as meaning, what

